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(16) (1) *Island, Liberty*
The Danger of Mercenary Parliaments.

1. **S**everal Treatises have been formerly written, and more (I doubt not) will be in this juncture publish'd, with Directions and Informations to the People of *England* for choosing fit and proper Representatives for the ensuing Parliament, wherein sufficient notice will be taken of the Failures and Defects of several who have already been entrusted in that Service, and the due Qualifications of such who are now to be elected. I shall therefore confine my present thoughts only to one particular Head, which yet, in my opinion, seems to involve in it the inevitable Fate of *England*, which wholly depends upon the choice of Members for the next Session of Parliament: I mean, *the choosing or refusing of such Persons who are now possess'd of any Places and Preferments, depending upon the gift and pleasure of the Court.* If herein my Endeavours prove unsuccessful, I shall have nothing left but the satisfaction of my own Conscience to support me under the deplorable Consequents and Effects which must necessarily attend the choice of a House of Commons fill'd with Officers and Court-Pensioners. This is the last struggle and effort the People of *England* have left them for their Properties; and should we now miscarry in this, we may sit down and idly shew our Affections for our Country, and fruitlessly bewail the loss of our Liberties, but shall never meet with another opportunity of exerting our selves in its Service. That I may therefore set the Minds of People right in this Particular ere it be too late, I think it will be only necessary to shew the danger of choosing Members that are in Places from two Considerations: First, From the nature of such a Parliament consider'd in it self: And, secondly, From what has already been done by Parliaments so qualified. In both which I shall be very brief, and content my self with much fewer Arguments than might be urg'd

upon this Subject: For I should almost despair of being surviv'd by the Liberties of *England*, if I could imagine there was a necessity of saying much in a case not only of such irresistible Evidence and Demonstration, but also of the utmost concern and importance to us.

2. First then, We shall best be able to understand the nature of such an ill-chosen Parliament, by comparing it with a true one, and with the original design of Parliaments in their Institution. I hope it need not be told that they were at first intended for a Support to the King's just Prerogative, and a Protection to the Subjects in their as just Rights and Privileges: For maintaining all due Honour to the Executive Power, and all suitable respect and encouragement to those who are intrusted with the Administration of the Laws: For a poise and balance between the two extreme contending Powers of absolute Monarchy and Anarchy: For a check and curb to insolent and licentious Ministers, and a terror to ambitious and over-grown Statesmen: For giving their Advice to his Majesty in all matters of Importance: For making necessary Laws to preserve or improve our Constitution, and abrogating such as were found burdensom and obsolete: For giving the King Mony for defraying the Charges and Expences of the Government, or maintaining a necessary War against Foreign and Domestick Enemies: For examining and inspecting the Public Accounts, to know if their Mony be applied to its true use and purposes: In short, For the best Security imaginable to his Majesty's Honour and Royal Dignities, and the Subjects Liberties, Estates, and Lives.

3. This being the nature and true design of a Parliament, let us now see whether a House of Commons, full of Officers and Court-Pensioners, will answer those noble and laudable Ends of their Constitution:

And here indeed I begin already to be ashamed of my undertaking; the proof of the Negative is so ridiculous, that it looks too much like a Jest to ask any one in his Wits, Whether a Parliament fill'd with Delinquents will ever call themselves to an account, or what account would be given if they should? Whether an Assembly of public Robbers will sentence one another to be punish'd, or to make Restitution? Whether it is possible our Grievances can be redrest, that are committed by Persons from whom there is no higher Power to appeal? Whether there is any hope of Justice where the Malefactors are the Judges? Whether his Majesty can be rightly inform'd in Affairs relating to Himself or the Public, when they are represented to him only by such Persons who design to abuse him? Whether the Public Accounts will be faithfully inspected by those who embezzle our Money to their own use? Whether the King's Prerogative can be lawfully maintain'd by such who only pervert it to their own sinister ends and purposes? Whether a Parliament can be a true balance, where all the weight lies only in one Scale? Or, lastly, Whether a House of Commons can vote freely, who are either prepossess'd with the hopes and promises of enjoying Places, or the slavish fears of losing them? Methinks it is offering too much Violence to human Nature to ask such Questions as these; I shall therefore leave this invidious Point.

4. Yet lest still any should remain unsatisfied, or lull'd into a fond opinion, that these Mischiefs will not ensue upon the Elections they shall make, I shall further endeavour to convince those who are most mov'd by the force of Examples, by coming to my second Particular, and shewing how Parliaments so qualify'd have all along behav'd themselves. And here I must confess there are not many Instances to be given, the Project of corrupting Parliaments being but of a late date, a Practice first set on foot within the compass of our own Memories, as the last and most dangerous Stratagem that ever was invented by an encroaching Tyrant to possess himself of the Rights of a freeborn People; I mean K. CHARLES the 2d. who,

well remembering with how little success both He and his Father had made use of open Arms and downright Violence to storm and batter down the Bulwarks of our excellent Constitution, had recourse at last to those mean Arts, and underhand Practices, of bribing and corrupting with Money those who were intrusted with the Conservation of our Laws, and the Guardianship of our Liberties. And herein he so well succeeded, that the Mischiefs and Calamities, occasion'd by that mercenary Parliament, did not terminate with his Life and Reign; but the Effects of them are handed and continued down, and very sensibly felt by the Nation to this very hour. For it is to that House of Commons the formidable Greatness of *France* was owing, and to their account therefore ought we to set down the prodigious Expences of the late War: It was by those infamous Members that Money was given to make a feign'd and collusive War with *France*, which at the same time was employ'd either in subduing the Subjects at home, or oppressing our Protestant Neighbours abroad: It was this Venal Parliament in effect that furnish'd the King of *France* with Timber and skilful Workmen for building Ships, as well as expert Mariners, and a prodigious quantity of Brass and Iron Cannon, Morter-pieces, and Bullets from the Tower; by the help of which our own treacherous King was able to boast publicly, and thank God, that he had at last made his Brother of *France* a Seaman: By this means the Honour of *England* was prostituted, and our Natural and Naval Strength bet ay'd, with which, like *SAMPSON*, we should easily have broken all the Cords that *Europe*, or the whole World could have made to bind and enslave us, had not this Parliament made a Sacrifice of all to the Charms of a *French DALILAH*. To this profligate and villainous Reign we are to ascribe the loss of all the considerable Charters of *England*; the deaths of our best Patriots, the encouragement and almost establishment of *Popery*, the decay of Trade, the growth of Arbitrary Power, the ill effects of dishonourable Leagues, the shutting up of the Exchequer, the progress of all sorts of Debauchery,

the servile compliances at Court of a rampant *Hierarchy* in the Kingdom, the insolent Depopulation of the inferior *Clergy* both in the Universities and elsewhere, their slavish Doctrine of Passive Obedience and Nonresistance; in short, a general depravation of Manners, and almost utter extirpation of Virtue and moral Honesty. These and all the other Mischiefs of that Reign are justly chargeable to the account of that pension'd Parliament, who either were the immediate Authors, or the undoubted causers of them: who, tho they sat long and often, and could not be ignorant of our deplorable Condition, yet having their Eyes blinded with the dust of Gold, and their Tongues lock'd up with Silver Keys, they durst not cry out for the rescue of their Country, thus inhumanly ravish'd in their very presence. It will not consist with my design'd Erevity, nor is it here necessary to give the Reasons that induc'd the Court to dissolve that Parliament; nor shall I take any further notice of their great and fortunat oversight in doing it, nor of their unfeign'd Repentance afterwards for it: I shall only observe, That if the Nation had been so senselessly stupid to have chosen the same Members a second time, who were Pensioners in the foregoing Parliament, we had long ago suffer'd the dismal Consequences of our folly and madness in such a Choice; nor should we now have had this liberty to warn one another against splitting upon the like Rocks, and falling into the same Precipices. But they were wiser in those times, and the consideration of the dreadful Shipwrack they had so lately escape, made them choose Pilots of a quite contrary disposition, who, as far as in them lay, and as long as they were permitted to sit at the Helm, repair'd the shatter'd Vessel of the Commonwealth, restor'd its Honour, reviv'd its drooping Genius, gave force to its Laws, countenance to its Religion, and, in a great measure, reduc'd our banish'd Liberties, and expos'd the Persons who sold them to the universal hatred and reproach of their fellow Subjects; a Punishment indeed infinitely less than they deserv'd for the highest Crime a Member of Parliament is capable of

committing.

5. As for King *JAMES's* Reign, tho it was notoriously guilty of the breach and violation of most of our fundamental Laws, which sufficiently justifies our Carriage towards him, yet cannot we say that his Mismanagement is to be ascrib'd to the corruption of any Parliament sitting in his time. 'Tis true indeed he reap'd too much advantage from the Conduct of the brib'd Parliament in his Brother's Reign, and us'd all possible endeavours to procure such another for himself, well knowing it to be the most effectual means for carrying on his ruinous and destructive Projects; yet either from the unshaken Constancy of the People, or want of dexterity in his Ministers, he was altogether defeated in his Expectation.

6. This miserable disappointment of King *JAMES's* hopes made way for our late glorious Revolution, which was brought about by the hearty endeavours, and accompanied with the most unfeigned vows and wishes of all true Lovers of their Country, who from hence expected a full deliverance from their present Miseries, and a sure remedy from their future Fears: For what Happiness might nor the People well hope for under the Government of the best of Kings, supported by the best of Titles, viz. The general Consent and Election of his People? We were fill'd with golden dreams not only of a bare security for our Estates and Lives, but an inexhausted affluence of all manner of Blessings a Nation is capable of enjoying. But tho we have dreamt the Dreams, yet have we not seen the Visions. And tho the Nation is by this time sadly sensible how wretchedly they have fallen short of their expected Happiness, yet are they not all acquainted with the true Spring and Fountain from whence all their Misfortunes flow, which is indeed no other than that bare-fac'd and openly avow'd Corruption, which, like a universal Leprosy, has so notoriously infected and overspread both our Court and Parliament. 'Tis from hence are plainly deriv'd all the Calamities and Distractions under which the whole Nation at present groans: 'Tis this that has chang'd the very Natures of *Englishmen*, and

of Valiant made them Cowards, of Eloquent Dumb, and of honest Men Villains: 'tis this can make a whole House of Commons eat their own words, and countervote what they had just before resolv'd on: 'tis this could summon the mercenary Members from all quarters of the Town in an instant to vote their fellow Criminals innocent: 'tis this that can make a Parliament throw away the Peoples Money with the utmost profusion, without enquiring into the management of it: 'tis this that put a stop to the examination of that scandalous escape of the *Thoulon* Fleet into *Brest*: 'tis this that has encourag'd the mismanagements of the Admiralty in relation to the loss of so vast a number of Men of War and Merchant Ships, as well as other Miscarriages which were by all Men judg'd to proceed not from their want of understanding in Sea-Affairs: 'tis this that has hindered the passing a Bill so often brought into the House for incapacitating Members to bear Offices: 'tis this that could not only indemnify, but honour a leading Member for his audacious procuring and accepting a Grant of Lands, which by the Parliament had been set apart for the public Service; a Vote that shall stand recorded in their own Journals to the never-dying Infamy of that mercenary Assembly: 'tis this could make the same Person most confidently affirm, that he was sure the majority of the House would agree to what he was going to propose: 'tis this that could make Men of peaceable Dispositions and considerable Estates vote for a Standing Army: 'tis this that could bring Admirals to confess that our Fleet under their Command was no security to us: 'tis this could make wise Men act against their own apparent Interest: In short, 'tis this that has insatuated our Prudence, stagger'd our Constancy, sullied our Reputation, and introduc'd a total defection from all true *English* Principles. Bribery is indeed so sure and unavoidable a way to destroy any Nation, that we may all sit down and wonder that so much as the very name of a free Government is yet continued to us. And if by our wary choice of Members we should happen to recover our ancient Constitution, we shall with hor-

ror and amazement look back, and reflect upon the dreadful Precipice we so narrowly escape.

7. Fatal Experience has now more than enough convinc'd us, that Courts have been the same in all Ages, and that few Persons have been found of such approv'd Constancy and Resolution as to withstand the powerful Allurements and Temptations which from thence have been continually dispens'd for the corrupting of Mens Minds, and debauching their honest Principles. Such Instances of the frailty of human Nature may be given within these few years past, as might make a Man even asham'd of his own Species, and which (were they not so open and notorious) ought out of pity to Mankind to be buried in perpetual silence. Who can enough lament the wretched Degeneracy of the Age we live in? To see Persons who were formerly noted for the most vigorous Assertors of their Country's Liberty, who from their Infancy had imbib'd no other Notions than what conduc'd to the public Safety, whose Principles were further improv'd and confirm'd by the advantages of a suitable Conversation, and who were so far possess'd with this Spirit of Liberty, that it sometimes transported them beyond the bounds of Moderation, even to unwarrantable Excesses: to see these Men, I say, so infamously fall in with the arbitrary measures of the Court, and appear the most active Instruments for enslaving their Country, and that without any formal steps or degrees, but all in an instant, is so violent and surprizing a transition from one Extreme to another without passing the Mean, as would have confounded the Imaginations of *EUCLID* or *PYRRHO*. All the stated Maxims, in relation to the nature of Mankind, which have been long ago settled and establish'd by Philosophers and observing Men, are now baffled and exploded; and we have nothing left us to contemplate, but the wild extravagancies of Romantic Fables, the sudden conveyances of nimble finger'd Jugglers, the inimitable dispatches of transubstantiating Priests, or the now more credible Metamorphoses of Men into Beasts.

8. The necessity we have lain under
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of frequent meetings of Parliament during the War, has taught our Managers so much dexterity and address in their applications to the Members of that Assembly, that they are now become consummate Masters in that most detestable art of corrupting our Representatives, by hopes and fears of attaining or losing Offices and Preferments. And tho I here name Offices, yet those Offices are downright Bribes and Pensions, since they are held precariously from the Court, and constantly taken away upon non-compliance with the Court-measures; tho I am not ignorant that several considerable Pensions were also paid out of the Exchequer to Members of both Houses: For Places could not be had for all, tho they have tried all imaginable arts for dividing amongst themselves the considerable Posts in the Kingdom: For either by splitting of Offices amongst several Persons which were formerly executed by one, or by reviving such as were sunk, or by creating others which were altogether useless and unnecessary, or by promises of Preferment to those who could not presently be provided for, they had made above 200 Members absolutely dependent upon them. And what Points might not such a number carry in the House, who were always ready and constantly attending with more diligence to destroy our Constitution, than the rest were to preserve it? who represented not their Country but themselves, and always kept together in a close and undivided Phalanx, impenetrable either by shame or honour, voting always the same way, and saying always the same things, as if they were no longer voluntary Agents, but so many Engines merely turn'd about by a mechanic Motion, like an Organ where the great humming Bases as well as the little squeaking Trebles are fill'd but with one blast of Wind from the same sound-board? Yet a few of them may in some measure be distinguish'd from those *pointblank* Voters, whom neither their Country's Safety, nor their own more dear and valu'd Interest, nor the persuasion of their once intimate Friends, nor fear of Reproach, nor love of Reputation could ever prevail to join in an honest Point, or dissent from a Question that carried in it the

Violation of the Rights and Properties of the Subject. These are: the Men who have per-suaded his Majesty, or rather assur'd to themselves not to fill up any vacant Offices whilst the Parliament is sitting; but to keep all Pretenders in a dependence till the end of the Session, and bind them up to their ill behaviour, which will then be their best pretence to demand their Wages of Unrighteousness: Witness the Commission of Excise the last Session, which was sued for by, and promis'd to above 30 Competitors, who all did their utmost to signalize their several Merits for an Office, which doubtless will be at last divided amongst those who have deserv'd worst of their Country. By these means they made their Numbers and Interest in the House so great, that no Misfarrage in the Government could ever be redrest, nor the meanest Tool belonging to them be punish'd: some of which they did indeed take into their own hands, which rais'd in the People a high expectation that some extraordinary Penalties would be inflict'd upon them; when their design at the same time was nothing else but to protect and screen them from the ordinary course of Justice: such is now the difference in point of Corruption between a common Jury and the Grand Jury of the Nation! such a mutual assistance and support have they been to one another in the several mismanagements of their Trusts: so favourable have they been to their own Creatures, and so implacable to those who have any way oppos'd their unjust Proceedings, witness their scandalous Partiality in the case of *DUNCOMB*, which I hope to see printed at large for the satisfaction of the Public. If it were truly represented, I am sure there needs nothing more to excite in the People a universal detestation of their Arrogance and Injustice. And yet do these Apostates pretend to value themselves upon their Merit in contriving that most destructive Project of Exchequer Bills, by which all impartial men must either think they notoriously dissemble with us, or that they have indeed lost their Senses when they speak of publick Service; the word is so unbecoming in their mouths, and so aw-kwardly pronounc'd, that they seem not to

breath.

breath in their own element when they usurp the name. These are the men who have endeavoured to render our condition hopeless even beyond the power of the King himself to relieve us: For tho his Majesty be deservedly lov'd and honour'd by his People for his readiness to do them justice, and ease their oppressions, yet can we not expect it from him whilst he is thus beset and surrounded, and his Palaces invetted by these Conspirators against his own honor and the welfare of his Kingdoms. The only remedy therefore that remains is, to chuse such a Parliament who lie under no temptations, and are acted by no other motives but the real and true Interest of his Majesty and his Dominions; a Parliament that will fall unanimously upon publick Business, and be free from those petty Factions and personal Piques which in the late Session so shamefully obstructed and delay'd the most important Service of the Commonwealth.

9. If it should be pretended, That the Nation is yet unsettled, and the fear of King *JAMES* has forc'd them upon these extraordinary Methods, for their own preservation; I answer, That no cause whatsoever can be justly alledg'd in vindication of such vile arts and pernicious practices. But I would farther ask them, what necessity there is upon that account for their gaining such prodigious Estates to themselves in so short a time, and in so merciless a way, when the Nation was rack'd to the utmost by Taxes in a long and expensive War? Is it the fear of King *JAMES* that has brought such a reproach upon our Revolution, as if it needed to be supported by such mean and unjustifiable Practices? Is it the fear of King *JAMES* that makes us content he should live so near us, or that he should be maintain'd at our own charge of 50000 *l. per annum*? Or has not rather King *JAMES* been made the pretence for the unwarrantable Proceedings of our Conspirators during the War, and since the conclusion of the Peace? It is very strange that King *JAMES*, who is but their Jest in private, should be thus made their publick Bugbear to frighten us out of our senses like Children; so that

King *JAMES* must be at last our ruin abroad, who could not compass it by all his power and interest at home. And in this sense I am of their opinion, That we are not yet quite delivered from the fear of King *JAMES*, who must be made the instrument of our Slavery by those very Persons who pretend their greatest merit to consist in delivering us from him. But what is this but making the old abdicated Tyrant a footstool to ascend the Throne of absolute Power, and a Scaffold for erecting that proud and stately Edifice from whence we have so justly tumbled him down headlong? But 'tis to be hop'd the Nation will be no longer impos'd on by such state pretences as these, and that a well-chosen Parliament will not fail to pass their severest Censures upon those who would thus jest us out of all that is dear and valuable amongst us: That they will no longer resemble a flock of Sheep (as *CATO* said of the *Romans* in his time) that follow the Bell-weather, and are contented when all together to be led by the noses by such whole Councils not a man of them would make use of in a private cause of his own: That they will at last vindicate the honor of *England*, and imitate their wise Ancestors in hunting down these Beasts of prey, these noxious Vermin to the Commonwealth, rather than suffer themselves to be led in collars and couples by one mighty *NIMROD*, who upon the turning up of his Nose shall expect a full cry of sequacious Animals, who must either join voices or be turn'd out of the pack.

10. Notwithstanding what I have said, I would not have any of them either really imagine themselves, or falsely suggest to others, that I envy them their Places and Preferments, which I am so far from doing, that I wish they rather had them for the term of their lives; I desire only they may be subject to the Laws, and to some Power on Earth that may call them to account for their Misbehaviours, that they may not be their own Judges, that our sovereign Remedy may not prove our chief Disease, and that the Kid may be seeth'd in something else than its Mother's milk. Nor would I by any means deny them their Seats in Parliament, provided

ed they are in a condition to speak and act freely, and discharg'd from those temptations which I find they have not constancy enough to withstand; for after all, I still believe many of them so honest that nothing but Money or Preferments will corrupt them. But if nothing will satisfy them but the downright subversion of our Constitution; if they will be content with nothing but the utter abolishing of all Laws, and the rooting up of those fences and securities provided by our Ancestors for the preservation of all things that are sacred and esteem'd amongst mankind; it is high time for the Electors to look about them, and disappoint their unreasonable and exorbitant hopes, and to spew them out as detestable Members of the Commonwealth; not only as unfit to be trusted with their Liberties, but as unworthy to breathe in the air of a Free Government.

17. If any should say, That the alterations in Elections will stand us in no stead, since whoever are chosen will still be bought off and brib'd by Court-preferments: Answer, it will require a considerable time to new-model and debase a House of Commons, nor can it be done but by displacing all those who are already possess'd, to make room for these new comers, which will make the trade and mystery of Bribery more plain, and consequently more abhor'd. And since no Parliament can now sit above three years, the Court will meet with fresh Difficulties to interrupt them, which may possibly at last make them weary of these Practices. 'Tis true indeed, this Consideration ought to make us more circumspect in our choice of Members, for tho we should choose but an inconsiderable number of Pensioners, yet will they soon be able to work over a majority to their side: so true is the saying, *A little leaven leavens the whole Lump*. Whoever therefore out of any particular friendship, or other motives of fear or private Interest, should vote for any one Person so qualify'd; let him consider, that as much as in him lies, he makes a complement of all the Liberties of *England* to the insatiable avarice and ambition of State-men and Court-Ministers. Since therefore we have so narrowly escap'd our destruction,

and one Session more of the last Parliament would infallibly have ruin'd our Constitution, we cannot surely be so grossly oversee as to neglect the opportunity now put into our hands for avoiding the like hazards in time to come; which may easily be done, if the Freeholders and Burghers in *England* will petition and engage their Representatives to consent to a Bill which shall be brought into the House, to incapacitate all Members for holding Offices and Preferments: or if it should be thought too much to debar them altogether from the enjoyments of Posts of honor and advantage, let them keep them during good behaviour, and not otherwise; that such Places may not be reserv'd in store for those who shall be from time to time elected, and thereby a continued course of corruption be carry'd on successively thro the whole Nation, who will in a few years insensibly find themselves so universally infected with this insinuating Vice, that we shall be thoroughly ripe for destruction, and readily expose to sale the Liberties of *England* by Auction to the fairest bidder. If it was deservedly thought one of our most dangerous Grievances, that the Judges, who only declare the Law, should hold their places *ad beneplacitum*; what condition must we be in when our Law-makers themselves are subjected to the same temptations? Or what advantage have we got by having our Judges Commissions for life, when our very Legislature it self is prostituted to bribery and sordid gain? The fortune of *England* is now brought to the nicest point, and there are critical seasons, which if neglected, will never again be offer'd; and should we now fail in our duty to our Country, we shall assuredly fall unpitied by the rest of the world. But if on the other hand we can by our foresight and diligence prevent for the future the bribing and corruption of Parliaments, it is not to be imagin'd what security, what happiness, and what immortal reputation will be the never-ceasing concomitants of such a Settlement. If the very Rump of a Parliament, even in the midst of domestic Discontents, and beset on all sides with foreign Assaults and Invasions,

